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JPRS L/8695

1 October 1979

Near East/North Africa Report

(FOUO 38/79)



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NEAR EAST/NORTH AFRICA REPORT

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NORTH AFRICAN AFFAIRS

BRIEFS

BERBER MOVEMENT--A Berber movement is being formed in Libya. A Moroccan from the Moyen Atlas will provide the leadership for it. The movement which has as its objective the formation of a Berber state could make itself officially known before January 1980. At first, its armed and political actions will be confined to Morocco. [Text] [Paris JEUNE AFRIQUE in French 12 Sep 79 p 26]

MOROCCAN INQUIRY--Driss El Fellah, the Moroccan ambassador in Tripoli has been instructed to ask for clarifications on the remarks of a Malian exile (JEUNE AFRIQUE, No 975) stating that Libya is aiding and arming movements which have been charged with creating the Islamic United States of the Sahel. [Text] [Paris JEUNE AFRIQUE in French 19 Sep 79 p 39]

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AFGHANISTAN

ACTIVITIES, PROBLEMS, IMPACT OF MOSLEM REBELS DISCUSSED

Paris L'EXPRESS in French 11 Aug 79 pp 49-53

[Article: "The Afghan Tragedy"]

[Text] It took tanks and helicopters only a few hours to quell a revolt by an Afghan army unit on 5 August in Bala Hissar Fort on the edge of Kabul's Old City. This was the third military mutiny in 6 months. It was the most serious, however, and the first one in the capital. A former Afghan Government official, who wishes to remain anonymous, recently spent 2 months with Pashtun tribes along the Pakistani border. The following is his exclusive report on the Afghan rebellion currently Asia's most serious insurgency.

The principal religious leaders, currently-fugitives or refugees in Pakistan, have declared a holy war--the jihad--against the Marxist and pro-Soviet regime which has ruled Afghanistan since the bloody coup of 27 April 1978. In the space of a few months, guerrilla warfare has spread throughout the country. Early this summer, Kabul was the scene of bloody clashes for the first time. There were at least 100 casualties from the June uprising in the capital's Shi'ite district. Lack of security is such that Western embassies are seriously considering evacuation of their personnel. Panjshir Valley, some 60 km north of the capital, has joined the rebellion. The main supply route from the Soviet border has been closed since 20 July and there is fighting along that route. The city of Gardez in Paktia Province is surrounded by the rebels. The government is losing control of the country little by little. Only a few cities are still quiet, but precariously so.

The Afghan army, the main support of Nur Mohammad Taraki's regime, lacks combativity. Equipped by the USSR and guided by nearly 2,000 Soviet advisers, it has been subjected to systematic purges which have decimated its command echelons. The disappearance of officers suspected of "religious sentiments" or "lack of revolutionary zeal," and the lightning rise of party-affiliated noncommissioned officers have created a serious malaise among the troops, triggered occasional mutinies, and produced a high desertion rate.

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Three soldiers who defected to the rebels told me: "On 1 April, 160 officers and men of the garrison at Khost in the south of the country were executed before our very own eyes. They were charged with counterrevolutionary activities." Similar drumhead justice was also administered at garrisons No 4, 7 and 8 near Kabul and at Bagram and Shindand air bases.

As a direct consequence of the dissension in the army, "Soviet advisers" have become increasingly involved in counter guerrilla operations. Russian officers now participate directly in the fighting. They are flying combat missions, particularly as pilots of Mi-24 [attack] helicopters recently supplied by the USSR. These helicopters are too "sophisticated" for Afghan personnel.

Former Afghan officers who have fled to Pakistan claim that a new type of ground combat formation has been developed to counter the slightest inclination to revolt within the army: the first line of troops is composed of Afghan soldiers, and positioned behind them are "Khalqui" officers, members of the minuscule communist party. These officers will not hesitate to fire upon their men if they refuse to fight. The third line consists of Soviet advisers who watch everyone closely. Many observers are convinced that without the presence of these "advisers," the Afghan army would not have been able to conduct the furious retaliatory operations of the past few months.

Three MIG's Shot Down

Colonel Salahudine, who commanded a mechanized brigade, did succeed, nevertheless, in surrendering to the mujahidin, in late May, with his 2,500 men and all their weapons. Salahudine described the incident as follows: "My unit, assigned to the 7th Division stationed near Kabul, received the mission of rescuing the Khost garrison surrounded by the rebels. But when we encountered the mujahidin, they did not fire on us. Instead, with their loudspeakers, they read verses from the Koran about brotherhood between Moslems. In my brigade there were six Soviet advisers and 10 Khalqui officers. They, unlike the rest of us, immediately opened fire. Noting the growing uneasiness among my men, I took the time to consult my Moslem officers. We were of one mind: we neutralized our mentors and then surrendered. The Khalqui were court-martialed and shot. The Soviets were lynched by the mujahidin."

The guerrillas receive no material aid from the outside. At the beginning of the rebellion, they were scantily armed with ancient World War I English rifles or with revolvers fabricated by the Pashtuns. The latter are skilled craftsmen. They meticulously copy the weapons that fall into their hands, even modern automatic pistols. Regardless of whether the model is English, American, Russian or even Chinese, the reproduction will be perfect, even to the point of including the weapon's serial number and trade mark. But the mujahidin's arsenal still remained limited. Defections

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and raids on army posts have since provided them with such Soviet equipment as Kalashnikov automatic rifles, as well as anti-aircraft guns, and 120-mm cannon. These weapons have enabled them to shoot down three MIG's and two helicopters in 3 months, in the south of the country.

Captain Alahudin was the pilot of a MIG-21 shot down on 25 April by the Jadran tribes. We met him and he told us he had studied in the USSR and returned home 1 month before Taraki's coup d'etat. He himself belonged to that Jadran tribe he had been ordered to bomb. This fact no doubt saved his life. Retaliatory operations--bombing raids, mass executions--are conducted in merciless fashion. The eminent religious leader Miagul Jan, currently a refugee in Pakistan, told us: "One morning, aircraft and artillery belonging to the Kabul communists attacked my village of Tagab. The whole village was leveled, including the mosque and my house. Many people were killed or wounded. I managed to escape by some miracle."

Overcrowded Prisons

One of the survivors from the village of Karal in eastern Afghanistan's Konar Valley, witnessed a veritable "Oradour" [French village whose entire population was massacred by the Germans in 1944]. In early May, the army occupied Karal. The commander ordered all males--even those 12 years old--to assemble in the village square, supposedly to hear a speech by the deputy administrator. All were executed on the spot and their bodies thrown into the river, 639 of them. The women and children were forced to witness the massacre.

Prisons are overcrowded. Prisoners are also crammed into private homes requisitioned for this purpose or to serve as "interrogation centers," in other words, torture chambers. At the present time, there are more than 15,000 prisoners in Pulicharki prison a few kilometers from Kabul, a facility with cells built to handle only 6,000 inmates. A man who had spent several months there informed us: "Every night, soldiers would enter the cells, blindfold the prisoners, tie their hands, and take them out to face the firing squad. An International Red Cross representative, Mr Burel, a Belgian, was one day authorized to visit the prison. One of the prisoners spoke to him in French, a language the government representative who was present did not understand. The next day, that prisoner was shot, having been charged with divulging secrets to a foreigner."

Shortage of 500,000 Tons of Wheat

Though the government insists there are only 1,000 political prisoners, concordant evidence puts the total at more than 50,000. Summary executions and bombing raids, conducted occasionally with napalm, have reportedly produced a like number of victims. Some 150,000 Afghans have taken refuge in Pakistan and 5,000-7,000 persons swell their ranks each month, finding asylum in those border areas where tribes have always had a large degree of autonomy.

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Sher Mohammad Khan, a Pakistani government official, is a very busy man. He is currently commissioner for Afghan refugees. His hastily established office is in Peshawar, a provincial capital in northwest Pakistan. He is in his sixties, speaks fluent English and Pashto, and has served throughout his career primarily as a "political agent" with the Pashtun tribes and as a diplomat in Kabul. I asked him how many refugees there were. "It's hard to give you a figure," he smilingly replied. "We have a long 1,700-km border with Afghanistan. About 60,000 of the refugees are officially registered. But there are also many others. Afghans belonging to tribes whose domain lies astride the two countries, simply cross the border and move in with their "cousins" without informing anyone. For humanitarian reasons and out of Islamic solidarity we are, nevertheless, trying to help them. But Pakistan is not a rich country and our means are limited. Consequently, we have requested United Nations assistance."

On 6 May, the Kabul government declared a general amnesty, hoping thereby to prompt refugees to return. But the offer was rejected unanimously. All government efforts to reestablish a popular consensus have been equally fruitless. Its hastily adopted agrarian reform program has been limited to expropriating land from large landowners--without compensation--and parceling it out to poor peasants in 5-jereeb (hectare) lots, but without granting them any financial aid for equipment. As a result, 20 percent of the land is no longer being cultivated. In addition, last winter's unusual drought further aggravated the situation. At the present time, there is a shortage of 500,000 tons in the amount of wheat needed to tide the country over until the next harvest. Because wheat is the staple food of Afghans, the country faces possible famine.

The campaign to raise the literacy rate has fared no better. It has been hampered by a lack of qualified teaching and supervisory personnel, the country's elite having been purged or having fled to other countries. The equal rights policy was supposed to turn Afghan women into full-fledged citizens, but its blunders and lack of tact have offended more than convinced public opinion which, in fact, is little prepared to accept women's liberation.

The truth of the matter is that the regime suffers from basic defects that are deemed incurable by a profoundly traditionalistic people. As a former official who recently took refuge in Peshawar explained it to me: "There are three things that really matter to an Afghan: his religion, his freedom and his self-respect. Yet even though the Kabul regime does not officially acknowledge itself to be either Marxist or communist, its deliberately anti-Islamic policy, its blind, unreasoning repression, and its allegiance to the USSR to whom it seems to be 'selling' Afghanistan, have alined against it nearly all classes of the population."

The rebellion's religious aspect is obvious. By wanting to separate "mosque and state," the Kabul leadership caused an uproar. In this 98 percent Moslem country--out of an estimated population of 17 million--the Moslem ideology is not only a factor of unity between the different

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ethnic and linguistic groups which form the Afghan nation, but Islam, by its own characteristics, is a formidable political force.

There is nothing in the Koran similar to the Bible "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's and unto God the things which are God's." For Islam, there is no difference between the temporal and the spiritual, between the political and the religious. Hence the important role played by the "mullahs" (religious leaders) in the struggle against Kabul's "atheistic" regime.

Fifty Leaders, but No National Leader

Most of the important Afghan religious leaders who were lucky enough to escape the Taraki regime's acts of reprisal have taken refuge in Peshawar. All have issued calls for a holy war.

Yet the Afghan resistance movement is not yet prepared to assume power. A tribal chief admitted: "If the Taraki regime has managed to survive up to now, it is thanks to the division in the opposition and to the absence of a leader of national dimension and appeal."

In the field, each tribe retains its autonomy in the conduct of the war. Its tribal council ("jirgah") decides on the launching of an operation, its strategy and tactics. This explains the obvious lack of coordination in attacks organized by the mujahidin.

But that is not the greatest problem. Across the border in Peshawar, 10 organizations lay claim to political leadership of the opposition at the present time. They range in their views from Islamic fundamentalists to moderates, to pro-Chinese communists. "There are more than 50 persons vying for leadership of the resistance," noted a disillusioned Western diplomat. Not one of the religious leaders can, by himself alone, play a role comparable to the Ayatollah Khomeyni's because the majority of Afghans adhere to the Sunnite branch of Islam which, contrary to the Shi'ite branch, is not hierarchized and does not permit any one of their number to take the lead as "ayatollah" or as "imam."

Appeal to the King

Additional obstacles include tribal rivalries, ethnic and linguistic particularisms, and the absence of people's parties. That is why Afghans are turning more and more toward Rome where the former king has lived in exile ever since the 1973 coup. The 64-year-old Mohammad Zahir Shah, a lover of art and literature, who ruled for 40 years (1933-1973), has remained completely silent, even though some 20 members of his family, including two of his sisters, have been executed by the Taraki regime. His stubborn silence and passivity have disappointed some and embittered others. A tribal chief wrote to the king: "If you are asleep, wake up. And if you are awake, get moving." Another Afghan told me he was "shocked at the king's

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behavior. When a person has enjoyed royal privileges and the loyalty of an entire people for 40 years, he does not have the right to remain indifferent to that people's suffering." Observers are skeptical about the likelihood of the king becoming involved. "He does not have the temperament of a Prince Sihanouk," one of them explained. The only Afghan ambassador who has not lost his position since the Marxist coup is the one in Rome. He is one of the king's former ministers. A sign of the regime's gratefulness to the king.

Among a highly individualistic people, the king was viewed by tribal chiefs as "only the first among his peers." The regime's frantic propaganda effort to impose Taraki's personality cult frequently assumes insufferable aspects, clumsily magnifying his "greatness." A "greatness" which is today totally dependent on the USSR.

Admittedly the Soviet Union's influence in Afghanistan does not date from April 1978. While maintaining its neutrality and its membership in the nonaligned movement, Afghanistan still had close ties with its northern neighbor. More than half its foreign trade was with the USSR and its army was equipped with Soviet materiel. President Mohammad Daoud, who was overthrown and killed along with his entire family during the coup d'etat, had been the chief advocate of this rapprochement with the USSR. But conscious of his country's growing dependence on Moscow, he had wanted, some 2 years before his downfall, to restore a balance. He had turned toward Iran, Saudi Arabia, Libya and other noncommunist countries. This turnabout had highly displeased the Masters of the Kremlin. During Daoud's last trip to Moscow in 1977, Leonid Brezhnev had asked him: "When are you finally going to make up your mind to throw all Western experts out of Afghanistan?" Surprised and indignant, Daoud replied: "If some day we do decide to throw out the Western experts, rest assured that they will not be the only ones to leave Afghanistan." Andrey Gromyko, who was present at the meeting, diplomatically interrupted to announce there were no more items on the agenda and the meeting was adjourned.

Taraki does not hold the same views, even if he does constantly reaffirm his attachment to the policy of nonalignment. Afghanistan, it is true, has not, as yet, joined CEMA, the economic organization of the communist countries, or the Warsaw Pact. But in many respects, Afghanistan acts and looks like a satellite. Since 1978, it has signed some 50 agreements in Moscow, military, trade, cultural and other agreements. The most important of these is a treaty of friendship, good-neighborliness and cooperation concluded last December. It provides for "increased military cooperation" and joint implementation of "measures calculated to ensure the security, independence and territorial integrity of both countries." Above all, it makes it possible for the USSR to use Afghanistan as a "base" against Pakistan and Iran.

One need only look at the map. After the take-over of Afghanistan, only two very fragile obstacles remain in the path of realizing the old dream

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of the Czars of "gaining access to the warm seas." Those two obstacles are Pakistan and Iran, two countries grappling with enormous internal political problems. It is not mere chance that prompts the Taraki government today to uphold Afghanistan's "historical rights" to two of Pakistan's four provinces: Pashtunistan (northwest frontier province) and Baluchistan.

By helping Taraki assume power through a totally subservient communist party, the USSR seemed to have scored in the international chess game. But "Operation Kabul" is now proving to be much less profitable than the Soviets had expected. Far from being another Cuba, Afghanistan could become a Vietnam for the Soviets.

By supporting a regime having no popular base, except for the small Khalq communist party, the USSR has aroused anti-Soviet feelings that had not previously existed in Afghanistan. Some 100 Soviet advisers have been lynched by the mujahidin. And this is but the expression of widespread hatred. As a precautionary measure, the families of most advisers have been returned to Russia. Most important of all, Moscow is no longer even certain it can "save" the Taraki regime despite the massive infusion of arms. Yet Afghanistan would be a trap for the Soviet armed forces. Experts estimate that 300,000 men would not be enough to ensure control of the country. Not to mention the international complication such intervention would involve.

Afghanistan's transformation into a Soviet satellite is already greatly disturbing adjacent countries, Pakistan first and foremost. That country has thus far denied giving other than humanitarian aid to the Afghan refugees. But Pakistani Islamic parties are pressing the government to henceforth give them military aid. China views the presence of Russians in Kabul as a new link in the chain with which Moscow threatens to encircle it. Some 2 months ago, Pakistan's foreign minister was in Peking. Chinese leaders are said to have promised him their assistance should Kabul's armies violate Pakistani territory. Construction of the Karakorum road, the strategic route linking Pakistan to China's Sinkiang region, is already well advanced.

Centers of Deceit

Ayatollah Khomeyni is also highly displeased. He has so informed the Soviet ambassador in Teheran. In addition, he has promised Taraki "a fate similar to the Shah's if he continues to oppose the resurgence of Islam in his country." Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf emirates have sent emissaries to Pakistan to talk to representatives of the Afghan resistance. The Kremlin cannot help but be concerned about this attitude of the oil-producing countries. The USSR fills 80 percent of the oil needs of its satellites and will soon have to obtain its oil supplies on the world market: approximately 135 million tons in 1985, experts estimate.

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Furthermore, Afghanistan's Islamic and anti-Marxist uprising is likely to have repercussions on the Soviet Union's Asian republics. In a lengthy 20 July report, Mukhamadnazar Gapurov, the first secretary of Turkmenia's Communist Party, regretted Islam's "persistence" and "influence," and denounced "the foreign centers of deceit that are waging an unbridled propaganda campaign in favor of nationalism and pan-Islamism."

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EGYPT

AL-SADAT'S MOVES FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT DERIDED

Paris AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI in Arabic 10-16 Aug 79 p 14

/Article: "On the Occasion of the Coming Municipal Elections in Egypt: al-Sadat Transfers Powers to the Governors only on Paper"

/Text/ Next September, elections to the new local councils in Egypt will take place upon conclusion of the full term of the present councils (4 years). For months, hardly a speech by President al-Sadat has lacked a reference to local government as one of the basic props of "the democracy which is being implanted in Egypt" or "the administrative revolution which has been attained in Egypt."

Toward the end of last year, President al-Sadat announced that he had decided to transfer his powers to the governors as of the beginning of this year. The announcement on this was made in the midst of rousing noise about "democracy;" so far, however, the executive bill on the decree transferring powers has not been issued, now have the decrees bearing on the transfer of departments, bureaus and productive units from central ministries to local government units.

Up to now, the governors must still get in contact with the ministry and the Office of the President, where all powers and authority are concentrated, every morning and evening to learn what must and must not be done in solving the problems peculiar to their governorates.

President al-Sadat rejects the notion that appointment of governors should be by election, which is what all opposition parties, including the official government opposition (the Labor and Liberal Parties), are calling for. In addition, the Local Government Law contains many restrictions on the local councils' rights and means of exercising activities; the articles of the law allow the governors, senior officials in the governorates and the Ministry of Local Government to delay the acts and decisions of the councils.

It seems that the governors in Egypt have realized what al-Sadat wants of them when he talks about the transfer of powers, namely that each of them

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be a "little Sadat" in his governorate. The conduct of many of them has become the object of people's talk and clamor. Most of them totally ignore that local elected councils exist, delay the activities of these councils so that they cannot carry out their responsibilities, and challenge their decisions.

In spite of all this, obstruction, some local councils have managed to reveal certain serious deviant behavior, such as speculation in public food commodities, speculation in property, and exploitation of public resources for private ends.

Perhaps the two most conspicuous occurrences in this regard were the al-Jizah Local Council's opposition to the Pyramid Heights project and the position the local council of al-Gharbiyah Province took on the conduct of the governor, a person close to al-Sadat; the crisis concluded when the chairman of the council was compelled to resign.

As was exactly the case with the last People's Assembly, a number of local council members were dismissed on the charge of "casting doubts and exploiting the sufferings of the masses" as a punishment for raising touchy subjects regarding the exploitation of influence by some officials in their governorates.

After the events of the last People's Assembly elections, and the removal of the opposition from the assembly, it was natural that President al-Sadat should turn to the local councils as a new step to "implant democracy" in order to form local councils from persons chosen and made to win in the manner pursued in the People's Assembly elections.

The National Party, which al-Sadat heads, proceeded to prepare for local council elections; the newspapers announced that the party would choose its candidates from persons it did not nominate for the last People's Assembly elections who did not declare themselves as candidates running against party nominees, as well as persons who accepted the party's orders and pressure to withdraw their candidacy in favor of people nominated by the party.

In these elections, the events of the People's Assembly elections will be repeated--a challenge to the list of party candidates will be made by party members themselves. The rebellion will be more widespread now that the party has failed to adopt measures it has on numerous occasions threatened to adopt against people challenging its decisions and candidates.

Here one might wonder about the position of the forces opposing President al-Sadat, following their bitter experiences in the latest People's Assembly elections and the transfer of lists of candidates to labor union boards to the Socialist Prosecutor, who removed those whom the security agencies considered it necessary to remove.

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So far the dominant tendency is that it is necessary to participate in the local council campaign in order to continue exposing the authorities' blatant technique of interfering in guiding the voting results.

However, it is feared that the Socialist Prosecutor will interfere to isolate those opposition party or independent candidates whom the security agencies see fit to isolate, although the expected number of candidates and the flow of "locally opposed persons" into the nominations will make the Socialist Prosecutor's task of "purifying" the lists of candidates, to say nothing of elements with noticeable influence extremely difficult.

Although no one doubts that Maj Gen al-Nabawi Isma'il, minister of the interior, will continue his mission of removing and toppling opposition figures, the majority of the opposition forces are determined to keep on performing their commitments toward all the people and making the regime bear the responsibility for repeated interference and fraud.

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EGYPT

DOMESTIC OPPOSITION TO AL-SADAT REVIEWED

Paris AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI in Arabic 10-16 Aug 79 pp 16, 17

/Article: "al-Shadhili's Memoirs Are Being Circulated among 'Free Officers' Publications inside the Armed Forces: Egypt--the National Alternative to al-Sadat"/

/Text/ To the naked eye, President al-Sadat, squatting on the throne of the "head of family," which he innovated in the regime ruling Egypt, seems mentally at ease, moving back and forth among his palaces spread about over the Valley. These palaces, as of July 1979, numbered 21, the most recent of them being Marsa Matruh, whose marble was imported from Italy. al-Sadat utters a word at a moment of "revelation" or a conversational meeting--it makes no difference--and this is transformed into a law imposed on the necks of slaves within the bureaucratic machinery of government. Around him sit yes-men, persons singing praise of his glory and sycophants, from Vice President Husni Mubarak to Dr Sufi Abu Talib, Chairman of the People's Assembly--not to mention the constant day and night comrade, the regime's engineer 'Uthman Ahmad 'Uthman.

From abroad, the picture of al-Sadat on the throne of the "head of the family" seems stable, with nothing threatening its survival, no alternative gathering on the horizon, and nothing disrupting its purity except for a few disturbances limited in volume and place which rise up from time to time then are quickly stilled. These disturbances have not joined forces yet to form a comprehensive destructive movement which could tear the head of the family from his throne.

Perhaps the only time when these disturbances crystallized in a severe general movement was when the Egyptian streets, with all their groups, ordinary classes and generations, were pillaged, from Alexandria to Aswan, on 18 and 19 January 1977 in what was known as "the popular uprising" against the regime's economic policy--slanted in favor of the rich over the poor and international capital over the domestic economy--and its corruption. The uprising forced al-Sadat and his regime, which at that time was run by the political police officer Maj Gen Mamduh Salim, to declare a retreat from economic decisions a day after they were approved.

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al-Sadat's tactic in announcing the retreat was a means for absorbing the mass anger, fragmenting the spontaneous movement, obstructing it and the organization of its forces, and separating its unified, competent leaders. No sooner did the movement slacken and become fragmented than al-Sadat and his police regime descended on it in a series of brutal repressive blows, after which al-Sadat ascended his throne and charged that the "popular uprising" was "an uprising of criminals."

Some people lean on this classic picture of al-Sadat on the throne of the head of the family in order to stress the regime's stability and the absence of all potentially effective domestic national threats to him. To this they add the throngs of people which received al-Sadat when he came back from his visit to Israel in late 1977, from Camp David in 1978, and lastly from Washington after signing the separate peace treaty in early 1979, to demonstrate that there is no possible alternative to al-Sadat and his solid new throne in Egypt in the foreseeable future.

A Grievous Mistake in Reading History

However, some others, growing in force and volume, lean on this same classical picture to demonstrate the opposite, that is, that the throne of the head of the family is shaking underneath al-Sadat; that al-Sadat's regime and throne are incessantly facing successive and escalating waves which are crashing against his security and stability; that the popular uprising of January 1977 was in reality a powerful jolt which enabled the conglomeration latent in the depths of the society to become aware of all the popular, democratic and liberal forces for effecting change and bringing down the throne of the head of the family along with its owner and his disciples, sycophants and notorious engineer; and that to gloss over the popular uprising as if it were a transitory event is a grievous mistake in reading the movement and direction of history on the Egyptian stage.

These people add the insight that al-Sadat's activity in the years from 1977, the year of the uprising, to 1979, the signing of the separate peace treaty, has only been an obstinate attempt, by a ruler who has a strong awareness of the danger surrounding him domestically, to fortify his throne and regime against mass uprising by providing himself with special protection from America and Israel in entering into a military-political alliance with them.

These people point out that al-Sadat's American-Israeli movement occurred before the end of the year of the popular uprising as a kind of defensive reaction on the one hand, aimed at preventing the forces of the uprising from combining and organizing further by stirring up struggles and disputes within these forces over false causes such as the incompatibility of Egyptian and Arab interests, the error of Egypt's participating with the Arabs in the struggle against Israel, the renaissance of Egyptian civilization, and its cooperation with Jewish civilization in confronting Arab backwardness.

The Absurd Relationship between Peace and Welfare

Although al-Sadat and his sycophants, at the outset, succeeded in combining the movement toward America and Israel with the creation of urgent solutions to the economic and social crises which the people are suffering from, it soon became confirmed that this success was fraudulent and temporary; with time, it was proved that there was no relation between the separate peace with Israel and solution of the Egyptian economic crisis. To the contrary, there is a relation between the peace with Israel and the deepening of the economic crisis and Egypt's isolation from its Arab homeland with all its resources, markets and fraternal values.

Today, now that no more than 5 months have passed since the conclusion of the separate peace between Egypt and Israel, the Arab boycott has just started to play its part, striking out first of all at a group of parasitic service activities within Egyptian society whose proponents are rich people enthusiastic about the head of the family and his policy who concentrate in exploiting furnished apartments, tourist hotels, shops for imported luxury goods (known as al-Shawaribi Street), and taxi services.

The Arab boycott occurred and the Egyptian regime kept reassuring this parasitic sector within its social base that it was formalistic and would not greatly or even slightly affect its activities; however, the boycott cut the Arab tourist market in Egypt back by no less than 70 percent, throwing thousands of apartments, persons working in tourist and hotel services and taxi drivers into ruin or unemployment.

Thus this sector, which occupies a not unconsiderable piece of the head of the family's social base, has been turned into an opposing force.

There is anxiety among the ordinary masses--who are not affected and whose concerns al-Sadat has exploited, directing their powers to his benefit against the Nasirist experiment, industrialization, planned development, Arabhood and the struggle against Israel (on grounds that all this was to blame for the citizens' poverty and deprivation of the simplest necessary requirements for a human existence)--because the alliance with America and Israel has not brought rapid prosperity.

Under the pressure of reality and daily life, with the shortages which have become aggravated since the signing of the treaty, the deterioration in the standard of living, and the insane price increases, these masses have come to realize, politically, that the solution to their problems will come not through a separate peace with Israel or isolation from the Arabs, but rather through a basic, fundamental change in the regime's policies and economic and social choices, by directing these to the service of the poor people, workers and productive domestic capital and not the small rapacious group of parasites of whom Eng 'Uthman Ahmad 'Uthman has become the registered trade mark.

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This atmosphere, whose elements are joining forces today, has given numerous patriotic forces, which differ in the extent of their opposition to the regime, their perspective on it, and their intellectual and political premises, a chance to coalesce in a general nationalistic framework in order to crystallize the movement of a national front for change based on:

Abrogating the separate peace treaty and returning to the Arab nation.

Turning the regime of the head of the family's formalistic democracy, which is hiding a disguised repressive dictatorship, into a real democracy which all national forces, organizations and parties will enjoy.

Returning to the policy of planned development of the domestic economy while giving domestic capital a real, assured opportunity for productive, not parasitic, activity.

Features of the National Front

It became possible for this fledgling front movement to crystallize in a united stand in the last People's Assembly and the election campaigns which brought in the present one. In this campaign, a group of features which revealed the farce of "the regime and its stability" and the lack of an alternative whose forces could coalesce within the society manifested themselves.

Among these features are:

Confrontation of the authorities' armed violence to make their candidates win with an opposing mass armed violence on behalf of front candidates.

Issuance by the head of the family of a law preventing the opening of any dialogue on the treaty and peace with Israel, considering that anyone calling for or conducting such a dialogue is a "political criminal" to be prohibited from exercising his political rights, although challenges to this law have been made in more than one instance.

Detention of a number of National Front candidates by the authorities, to keep them from personally engaging in electoral publicity although they actually won the majority of the votes (although the falsification apparatuses of Interior Minister al-Nabawi Isma'il succeeded in erasing the real outcome, prompting the masses to go out on tumultuous demonstrations to expose the falsification and challenge the government).

Refusal by a number of judges who took part in supervising the election process to carry out the authorities' orders and on occasion the president's personal orders to fabricate the results to the detriment of the front's candidates; some judges chose to submit resignations with cause.

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In numerous forms, in a flexible and non-traditional manner, the national front is gathering together the forces of the Wafd, liberalism, the left, Nasirites and some religious currents--especially one segment of the religious groups which has its weight--in joining front activities for the first time since 1952.

The National Alternative--and the American One

If today the Americans are preparing for an "alternative" in Egypt, the main motive for that obviously must be their fear that the national movement will beat them to selecting its alternative. Also, the national movement must be aware that the Americans' movement aims at bringing down the national alternative by a fraudulent one.

The national forces' movement, in its search for an alternative, or the form the alternative could take, is not clear enough to observe, but an observer can nonetheless strongly perceive that the issue of the "national alternative" has been raised forcefully and is the object of a struggle with the head of the family and the Americans together.

For example, there are policies, with specific tendencies and goals in national and domestic matters and economic and social policies, which are opposed to those of the regime. These policies have come to have a positive effect among the masses and on the political stage, to the point where al-Sadat himself has been compelled to debate them openly in an effort to implement them and prove that they are not realistic.

Polling operations are also being carried out in numerous segments of Egyptian society by American, Egyptian and on occasion Israeli journalists sometimes in a manner close to "espionage," as the national forces feel, in order to ascertain the nature, working methods, direction of thrust and personalities being proposed to assume responsibility for and leadership of the domestic groupings.

The Situation within the Armed Forces

It seems that the process of moving toward an alternative among the Americans and the national forces is almost the same: this is the "civilian-military alternative." Of course, however, it differs in content.

From outside, the armed forces seem like a big question brimming over with obscurity. However, successive events are providing some answers to this question and shedding light on some aspects of its obscurity.

Among these events, and the most important of them, is the beginning of the large-scale distribution, in the branches of the armed forces, of pamphlets signed by "the new free officers" condemning the policy of alliance with the Americans and with Israel, defending the nationalism and

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Arabhood of the army and the country, and demanding that action to establish a democratic parliamentary regime, liquidate the parasites and try those responsible for the corruption of the regime to be taken.

So far, large-scale investigations have not succeeded in ascertaining the organization which is issuing these publications. On whose pages the phrases and expressions identical to those of the national movement are being bruited about. Although the existence of an organizational link between the national movement and the armed forces has not yet been established, a number of "senior officers" conducting political indoctrination in the army on behalf of the regime have observed that questions from young officers and soldiers are phrased in the expressions of the national movement's statements and writings.

A seizure has also been made in the army of distributed photocopies of the memoirs of Lt Gen Sa'd-al-Din al-Shadhili, published by AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI, in which al-Shadhili portrays a true picture of the October 1973 war wholly different from that al-Sadat draws. It is being said that the quantity of copies and the efficient organization of the distribution of these memoirs show that a sort of organization trained in this work, within the context of political indoctrination opposed to that of the regime, exists. Investigations have not shown whether or not Lt Gen al-Shadhili himself was behind this organization.

A review of these facts brings us to an important political truth: the objective conditions for change and for the presentation of a national alternative to the throne of the head of the family exist in Egypt, although the intrinsic elements entailing effective organization and necessary qualified leadership are still in the leavening and formation stage.

The race between the Americans and the national movement to bring their "alternatives" to power is at its most intense.

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IRAN

BAKHTIAR GIVES KHOMEYNI FASCISM LESS THAN A YEAR

Paris LE NOUVEL OBSERVATEUR in French 20 Aug 79 pp 31-33

[Interview with Shahpur Bakhtiar by Pierre Benichou in Paris, date not given]

[Text] In Iran, 6 months to the day after the uprising which last February swept Khomeyni into power, the streets of Tehran are once again the scene of bloody battles. This time, though, it is a portion -- liberal and leftist -- of the middle class that has taken to the streets in protest against the Ayatollah and his all-out Islamic regime, to shouts of "Down with fascism! We want democracy!"

The spark that set off the powderkeg, aside from some irregularities that marred the elections to the constituent assembly a fortnight ago, came from the silencing of AYANDEGAN, the top progressive non-Islamic daily, and the new press law which provides a penalty of 3 years in prison for any reporter publishing "false reports" or slandering the spiritual leaders of the revolution.

The peaceful demonstrations mounted by the National Democratic Front were targets for violent attacks by small groups of Muslim extremists, chanting "Death to the godless communists!" These extremists, who claim they are Khomeyni's followers, although not directly under his control, took advantage of the occasion to sack and vandalize the offices of leftist organizations, including the Fedayeen (independent Marxists) and the Moujahidin (Moslem socialists), as well as bookstores close to the university.

Rumor has it that they were provocateurs sent to infiltrate these groups by SAVAK, the shah's dread secret service, and by the CIA. Be that as it may, their action was not disavowed either by the government -- which reacted mildly by putting a ban on all demonstrations -- or by Khomeyni himself. On the

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other hand, a warrant has been issued for the arrest of the leader of the National Democratic Front, attorney Matine-Daftary, 40, Mosaddeq's grandson.

According to the ayatollah's supporters, the leftists and liberals are playing into the hands of the counterrevolutionaries who are beginning to organize all over Iran and abroad around generals and politicians from the old regime. As yet they are not united to any degree, but the blunders and excesses of the current system are making these groups more powerful by the day.

At the core of this opposition in exile, of course, sits the shah's last prime minister, Shahpur Bakhtiar. In Paris, after 6 months in hiding, this man on whom it is difficult to get any political fix, seems to be determined now to make his voice heard and to take the lead in the struggle against the new regime. Here is what he told Pierre Benichou...

Benichou: You like to liken yourself to De Gaulle... Those who feel you have no right to do this will tell you that De Gaulle would never have agreed to head Petain's last government in 1944. You, though, were ready enough to be the shah's last appointee to that post...

Bakhtiar: De Gaulle was also the last prime minister to be appointed by Rene Coty, last president of the 4th Republic, whom the general cordially detested. You do see, don't you, that you can't take historical comparisons too literally. Now that we have that out of the way, what I actually said at my press conference a fortnight ago was this: "In 1940, De Gaulle was in a foreign country while his own country was occupied. Today Iran is occupied by forces supported from abroad, and I am here in France." I will stand by that statement, word for word, even though some reporters winced and even though the NOUVEL OBSERVATEUR headlined its report on the press conference "A Disappointment Named Bakhtiar!" (NOUVEL OBSERVATEUR, 6 August 1979).

Benichou: True. Everybody was expecting you to come out with some sensational revelations, or maybe a political program.... But you left them all there with their tongues hanging out...

Bakhtiar: You'd have to have a pretty short retention span not to know about my political program. After all, I implemented that program while I was still in Iran. I was prime minister for precisely 39 days. That's a pretty short term. Well, even so, I had time enough to persuade the shah to go into exile, time enough to take control of an army that recognized no authority save the shah's, time to get parliament to pass a law dissolving SAVAK, and time to restore complete and total freedom to the press, provided I was willing to be its first victim. But I am here to tell you that I took all the newspapers' insults with

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a smile. Yes, you see I do believe in democracy, and being attacked in the press was part of democracy. For the first time in 25 years!

Benichou: And in spite of all that, the country wouldn't have any part of you! It chose Khomeyni. How do you explain that?

Bakhtiar: How do you explain the whole Khomeyni phenomenon? That's almost exactly the same question the shah asked me during the first talk we had, the one at which he told me he was going to tap me to head his government. Yes, what he said to me was these very words: "How do you explain Khomeyni?" And I answered him very simply: "By the very fact that you exist, and by the way you have run this country for 25 years."

Benichou: Could you talk like that to the shah of Iran?

Bakhtiar: I don't know: but anyhow, I did it. In the state he was in, he knew in his bones that his last chance was a constitutional monarchy. His regime, though, had indulged in such violent repression and been so dreadful to all its opponents that there was no political organization representative enough to take over the government. And the religious factions, of course, had always been completely in the shah's hands.

Benichou: Some of the religious groups were, that is true, especially during the days when Nassiri -- who was simply another Eichmann -- was running things. Not the Shi'ite hierarchy. The mullahs who did not collaborate with the king are few and far between. Under Mosaddeq, in the days when the fight to nationalize the oil fields was on, the mullahs were against us. The clergy has always been opposed to progress...

It was the Americans who told the shah: "Where there are religious people, there is no communism. So get a grip on the mullahs. Upshot: the young people turned to the mosques, because elsewhere, where the politicians were, there was no freedom of assembly -- it was a desert. And of course the Americans were the first to pay for their tactics. They're crying now, are they? Sorry about that!

Benichou: And yet the American intelligence people weren't asleep at the switch. They must have known what was going on in the mosques...

Benichou: Listen: all you hear about the effectiveness of the American undercover people in Iran is a myth. If the United States had an intelligence service worth a damn, it would have made contact with nationalist elements, with the opposition people. It was because they never did that that things suddenly fell apart the way they did. Was it the tender affection Mr

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Kissinger or Mr Nixon felt for the shah that blinded them? The fact remains that America saw absolutely nothing of what was really happening in Iran. As for myself, the first time I ever laid eyes on the United States ambassador was only 10 days before I took office.

Benichou: Today you and Khomeyni are at daggers drawn -- he has even had you sentenced to death -- and yet only last January you were supposed to come and meet him at Neauphle-le-Chateau.

Bakhtiar: My plane was ready and waiting. He was the one who called off the meeting at the last moment. He knew perfectly well that I would never back down from my position: "Mullahs back to the mosque!" We agreed on one thing: that the shah's getting out was the prime condition for any kind of national recovery. But we found nothing else on which we could agree, for the very good reason that ever since 1963 his one and only demand has been his political program. For him, Islam comes before anything else. Islam must rule the world as Catholicism did in the days of Charlemagne. And he thinks of himself as the pope of Islam, even though, of the 500 million or so Moslems in the world, less than one in ten is Shi'ite, and never mind the fact that, even within the Shian sect, there are many, many factions which do not recognize his authority...

Benichou: What about you? Are you a believer?

Bakhtiar: I am a Moslem, from a family that is not practicing, but which has always been irreproachably Moslem.

Benichou: Just what does that mean?

Bakhtiar: That we have never done anything forbidden by the faith of our fathers. Now that I've said that, and since you were talking about De Gaulle, do you believe that he was truly, completely Catholic? He was a Maurras man more than anything else, and a Maurassian can never truly be a Catholic. Reread your [Charles] Maurras: he's pretty good, in spots... At one point in his life, Gide was more of a Catholic than he was! I mean it: at one point -- at the time of his marriage. You know that he was torn his whole life long between Catholicism and protestantism, right up to the day when he wrote, in "Thesee": "No, He doesn't exist. There is nobody there." he simply scrapped the problem.

Benichou: It's all very well to read and hear everywhere that you feel a deep attachment to French culture, and to listen to these references to Maurras and Gide when you are in exile, in danger, and while your country is going through one of the most horrendous upheavals in its history -- you will admit that there is something astonishing in all this...

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Bakhtiar: And that leads you to what conclusion?

Benichou: That your occidentalism may be alienating you from your grip on Iranian reality.

Bakhtiar: Exactly what I expected. Now I'm a rotten occidentalist! But I ask you: is a Japanese less Japanese because he has mastered Western technology? Doesn't an Iranian have the same rights as a Japanese? Is an Iranian in greater danger of losing his Iranian identity if he soaks up other technologies, other cultures, other philosophies? Come on, now: let's be serious! Is it wrong for me to have stayed in France long enough to be persuaded that social democracy is the only system that could possibly suit my country, which happens to be Iran?

Benichou: Just how long have you held that conviction?

Bakhtiar: Long before yesterday. Ever since the Spanish Civil War. My first political act, when I was a student in Paris, was to go with several friends to hand-deliver a letter to old man Blum, asking him to send two divisions against Franco. He did not listen to us. That's the way things go. At the time, I was studying at the Political Science School [Sciences-Po], law school, and the Sorbonne -- all at the same time. At the Sorbonne, the atmosphere was a lot "redder." I was having trouble choosing among Blum, Herriot, and Bergery. Then came the war, and the French army, and all that...

Benichou: You went back to Iran at the end of the war and, a couple of years later, when the shah first fled the country, you popped up again as labor minister in Mosaddeq's government. Then you spent some time in prison, when he fell... How could a man like you stand up and tell a crowded press conference just 2 weeks ago that you "despise the rabble"?

Bakhtiar: I said that the people, the people are fine, but the rabble, no! And I stand by my guns! Because it isn't the people of Iran who support Khomeyni now, but a fanatical rabble that has never known what it is to have a political consciousness. A mob that has blindly tagged along after the most ignorant, know-nothing slogans you ever heard. A rabble that has plunged several centuries into the past in an idle, muddled interpretation of the Koran. I ask you: when you see kids of 15 or 16, submachinegun in hand, performing summary executions, can you believe that they are doing the will of the people?

Benichou: Isn't that what happens to every revolution?

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Bakhtiar: My view is that there is no revolution in Iran. Yes, there was heavy shelling, but that is not the same thing at all. A revolution needs a great, shining ideal. Khomeyni knows nothing at all about politics, economics, or social problems. His government is a disaster -- no other word for it. All he could think of was to nationalize the banks, which turned out to mean a state takeover of the fabulous oil fields, a slump in oil production, and an increase in unemployment.

Benichou: That sounds like what the shah ought to be saying..

Bakhtiar: The trouble is that the shah would have no moral right to talk this way, because he was the one who, thanks to his disastrous and megalomaniacal handling of the economy, made the present state of affairs possible. In spite of our tremendous oil wealth, this country was on the brink of bankruptcy even before he fled. He had made practically no productive investments, and his image-boosting expenditures were absolutely fabulous. He allowed the spread of unbelievable corruption, and made the most barbaric kind of torture an institution. He wasn't even aware of the fact that he -- more democratic than his wont when he was entertaining representatives from the United States or certain pet journalists -- was smiling and chatting while in the room next door Nassiri was operating his torture chamber as usual! And just to give you an idea of his managerial talents -- not to mention his flair for policy -- did you know that the Hoveyda government had granted enormous and almost interest-free loans to Gabon at a time when 99 percent of the Iranian people didn't know whether Gabon was a country or an auto-maker?

Benichou: Speaking of Hoveyda, his being sentenced to death after a mockery of a trial set off waves of indignation in France.

Bakhtari: There was good reason to be indignant. Hoveyda should have been tried. He had a right to a trial. The way he was treated was disgusting. Now that I've said that though, I think he deserved the death penalty. I believe in the state, you see. And I believe that anyone who violates the constitution is liable to the death penalty. That has been the law for 73 years. And Hoveyda had been systematically violating the constitution, year in and year out, on the pretext that he was merely following orders. But that was his greatest sin: never even trying to fulfill his mission as prime minister.

Benichou: Did you know him personally?

Bakhtiar: Yes, and as somebody has already said, he did have considerable personal charm. He never took anything seriously. He had some extremely superficial knowledge of the West as well as of the East. I repeat, though: what happened to him was shameful, yet no court worthy of the name could have found him

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anything but guilty. In my view, he committed more crimes than Petain did under the [Nazi] occupation. He could not adduce the valid excuse that the times were going to hell....

Benichou: We hear more and more often in France that the Islamic courts in Iran are less pitiless, and that their "errors" and "blots and smudges" have been fewer than one might have feared. There are those here in France who have estimated that 400 death sentences were the least one might have expected, considering the scope of the political cataclysm -- perhaps they were being just a tad frivolous...

Bakhtiar: Where did they get such a figure! There have been at least 7,000 deaths in Iran since Khomeyni took over!

Benichou: Couldn't you yourself have saved some hundreds of those lives by letting Khomeyni into Iran on 24 January? Countless thousands of people were clamoring for him. His plane was ready for takeoff at Roissy, and then you shut down Tehran airport for a week. When he finally did arrive, then, the situation was even more explosive than it need have been... That is one of the political errors people most blame you for. Do you regret it, as you look back on it today?

Bakhtiar: My answer to that may sound paradoxical. The reason why I ordered the army to shut down the airport is that I had very specific intelligence reports about Khomeyni's safety. He was not merely threatened. There were some of the shah's men who had sworn to kill him. And I was not actually in a position to stop them. It was only when I was sure I could guarantee Khomeyni's safety that I had the airport opened again. And there were reasons other than pure humanitarian considerations that made Khomeyni's survival important to me. Politically speaking, his death would have meant disaster. Throughout all my 39 days at the head of the government, that notion was literally an obsession to me. The mob already considered him a living demi-god. Dead, he would have become God Himself. To turn Khomeyni into Iran's great martyr -- yes: that would have been a real political blunder. An unpardonable blunder. If that had happened, nobody -- not I, not the Americans, not the Russians -- could have prevented a bloodbath.

Benichou: There was bloodshed, though, at least twice while you were in power: on 16 January and again on 27 January.

Bakhtiar: What actually happened was the least that could be expected, given the indescribable state of excitement in the mob and the state of the army. As for that army, I can say truly that I was the only one who could have kept it in hand. And I did keep it in hand during the 39 days of my government. I have

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calculated that, over the 4 months prior to my accession as prime minister, and the 4 months following my departure, there were no fewer than ten times more victims of violence -- civilian or military -- than during my 39 days in office. That one-to-ten ratio is my proudest boast.

Benichou: Tell me: just how did you feel when the shah, whom you had been fighting for 25 years, summoned you to form a government? Did you feel proud then, too?

Bakhtiar: No: my first thoughts were of the gravity of the situation. And that if there was a chance, even a slim chance, of saving the country, I had to take that chance. And then that the condition sine qua non for their being such a chance was the king's immediate departure. I told him so even before he gave me the prime minister's job, at our first interview, which was merely a "consultation:" the first such consultation the shah had asked for with a member of the main opposition party in 25 years! A quarter of a century, during which I rejected all the honors, all the jobs, all the advantages I had a right to demand. Not so much out of hatred for the king personally as of loathing for his regime.

Benichou: Surely you had no lack of personal reasons to detest him...

Bakhtiar: Of course there were family reasons. My family is one of the oldest in the country. My father was killed by a firing-squad at the orders of Shah Reza Pahlevi. Even so, I have always felt that holding a grudge, dreaming of vengeance, was something petty, somehow mean and beneath me. No, I fought the king strictly on political grounds, even though his attitude toward me was one of open hostility. It was on his personal orders that I was sent to prison so often, and on his orders that I lost my last job with a French company....

Benichou: How did that happen?

Bakhtiar: Until the beginning of 1978, I was manager of the Saint-Gobain-Pont-a-Mousson plant for Iran. One day "they" let me know that I would have to choose between my job and my political activities... Naturally, I chose to leave the company. And a year later, almost to the day, I found myself in the emperor's office, being tapped to form a new government.

Benichou: Have you had any contact with the shah since you resigned from the government?

Bakhtiar: None at all.

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Benichou: You told me before we began this interview that you would answer all my questions except those having to do with the circumstances surrounding your disappearance and with where you spent the first 6 months of your exile. If indeed it was exile, because, no matter what statements Michel Poniatowski may have made (i.e.: "Mr Bakhtiar is staying 350 kilometers from Clermont-Ferrand"), reliable witnesses agree -- as they say -- that you were in hiding in Iran. Well, I am going to put it to you straight: Was Mr Poniatowski lying?

Bakhtiar: I have never met the gentleman, so I can hardly make a judgment as to his good or bad faith. As for the rest -- no comment!

Benichou: That is your privilege! They say that you have plans to form a united front of those who do not like the present regime in Iran, including the moderate religious opposition; the intellectuals who, despite their hatred of the old regime, are beginning to be bored with the mandatory chador farce, the ban on music, and the sentencing of homosexuals; what is left of the National Front; and, finally, the members of the ethnic minorities (the Turks, Turkomans, etc.), and the Sunnite Muslims ... Is that indeed what you are planning to do?

Bakhtiar: No -- I hardly need to do much in the way of work to "make a united front of the malcontents," as you put it. Mr Khomeyni is doing all the work for me, and making a much better job of it than I could. There are so many angry people in Iran now, so many people whose eyes widen in horror as they say to themselves, "No! No! That is not what we meant, that is not what we meant at all!" that they will certainly find their own common denominator. And that one rallying banner, as I see it, can only be that of a social democratic state. Who will head it? Maybe I will, maybe somebody else will -- that isn't the real issue. The main thing is that every day Khomeyni loses some of his audience. He has never had a word to say in his whole life except, "Get out, king!" Well, now the king has got out -- I made him get out. Since then, he says nothing. Why? Because he has nothing to say. And so he just flounders around. "Islam will solve all your problems," say his spokesmen. For the time being, though, the nation's industry has ground to a halt: all the big construction projects, the oil fields, banking... How long do you think it can last?

Benichou: That's exactly what I was about to ask you.

Bakhtiar: Seven months, eight at the most. Less than a year in any case.

Benichou: Is that a bet?

Bakhtiar: No, it's not a bet: it's a certainty.

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IRAN

NEW UNDERGROUND WEEKLY TO BE PUBLISHED IN IRAN

London THE GUARDIAN in English 14 Sep 79 p 15 LD

[Dispatch by Liz Thurgood: "Paper Chase"]

[Text] Tehran--Iran's new centre-left has come together to produce ZED-E-CENSOR (AGAINST CENSORSHIP), a new underground weekly that its editors hope will fill the news gap created by last month's crackdown on the opposition press.

The decision by 20 small and large opposition groups to produce a new paper, tentatively due out this Sunday, is a major twist in Iran's continuing political tug-of-war that flared briefly into the open early in August when young men claiming to support Ayatollah Khomeini clashed violently with the secular opposition led by the National Democratic Front.

"The Iranian nation was shocked," said a member of the left of centre NDF, whose executive committee has been lying low ever since. "Khomeini's action (closing down the critical press and ejecting two major guerrilla organisations from their headquarters) was too reminiscent of the shah's regime."

The days following the August 12 violence appeared dark indeed. In addition to the ban on its publications, the opposition was publicly vilified and its leaders threatened with Islamic firing squads. Yet ironically, Iran's secular opposition has emerged strengthened rather than weakened by recent events which have also included bitter fighting in the western province of Kurdistan and the sudden death of Ayatollah Taleghani, the country's second most important religious leader whose popularity among the young rivalled that of Khomeini himself,

The groups behind ZED-E-CENSOR ranged from the NDF through a smattering of social-democratic styled parties to the Marxist fedayeen guerrillas and the banned Kurdish Democratic Party. Strong evidence also exists to show that the more moderate clergy and some traditional merchants in the bazaar may also involve themselves later in the weekly.

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The most noticeable absentee on the editorial board is the Moslem Mohahaddin-e-Khalq guerrilla organisation at present undergoing a crisis of identity. Two factions have emerged during recent weeks, one believing that what it saw as a split between the ayatollahs and the people should be actively encouraged, and the second, led by Massoud Rajavi, waiting passively for the Iranians themselves to take the lead.

The Tudeh (Communist) Party was not apparently invited to take part in ZED-E-CENSOR because of its suspect links with Moscow. Jombesh, perhaps best described as a coalition of moderate, intellectual religious parties, declined. ZED-E-CENSOR is widely seen as an attempt to give the opposition back its forum lost in August when AYANDEGAN was closed along with 26 other publications. Officials at the Ministry of National Guidance have stressed that the papers were closed not because of their opposition to the new regime, but because the central authorities suspected "a conspiracy" was afoot.

But many Iranians believe the real motive for the attack on AYANDEGAN lay in the paper's exposure of the political and economic problems facing Iran.

According to an NDF spokesman, ZED-E-CENSOR would print "the other news"--those items and statements (elamiehs) that get spiked by the country's increasingly Islamised press.

Whether the militant clergy and their Hezbollahis (literally people belonging to "the party of Allah") following could tolerate such an affront as ZED-E-CENSOR seems unlikely, particularly as the weekly's 20-man editorial board intends to openly flout the controversial new press law by not even bothering to apply for a licence.

At a recent editorial conference a member got to his feet and publicly thanked the ayatollahs for their role in bringing Iran's notoriously fragmented secular forces together. But no one in Tehran is taking any bets on whether the new glue will stick.

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MAURITANIA

BRIEFS

PRO-MOROCCAN, PRO-ALGERIAN DIVISIONS CONTINUE--"Pro-Moroccans" and "Pro-Algerians" continue to confront each other within the Mauritanian ruling team. The Premier, Lt Col Mohamed Khouna Ould Haidalla, did not take part in the nonaligned summit in Havana, because the CMSN (Military Committee for National Salvation) did not reach a consensus on the position to be defended. For the same reason, he did not reply to Colonel Qadhdhafi's invitation at the time of the 1 September celebrations in Libya. [Text] [Paris JEUNE AFRIQUE in French 19 Sep 79 p 40]

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SUDAN

BRIEFS

ARAB MINING INTERESTS--The Jordanian firm Arab Mining Company of Amman, in which a dozen Arab states are associated, is currently prospecting in Sudan. In particular, it is looking for iron or in the mountains of the Red Sea region and mica deposits in the [Sherek] region. The company is also looking for copper, asbestos, chromite and gold. The firm's administrative council is awaiting the results of analyses before entering into negotiations with the Sudanese Ministry of Energy and Mining. [Text] [Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS in French 24 Aug 79 p 2327]

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END

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